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» AUTOS
» REAL ESTATE
» RENTALS
classified
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newspaper ads
coupons

communities

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Glendale
Mesa
Northwest Valley
Peoria
Pinal County
Phoenix
Scottsdale
Southwest Valley
Surprise
Tempe

sunday sections

A&E
Travel & Explore
Viewpoints

weekly features

Food & Drink
Home/Real Estate
Movie Preview
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Sunday
Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday

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22 firms picked best for commuters

Dec. 15, 2006 12:00 AM

Over the past 11 years, employees of McKesson in Scottsdale have saved \$580,614 in gas costs, or an average of \$5,234 each.

How, you ask? By carpooling, telecommuting, riding the bus or participating in similar programs, according to **David MacDonald**, trip reduction coordinator for the health care services company.

Similar savings were achieved at Carlson Wagonlit Travel's Phoenix operation. That's because the company pays for employee bus passes and encourages them to live closer to work, said **Michele Dodd**, trip adviser for the firm.

advertisement

Those are just two of the 22 Valley companies named this year as Best Workplaces for Commuters by the Environmental Protection Agency.

To be selected for the national designation, companies must offer their workers at least one major commute benefit, such as transit passes, vanpool subsidies or telecommuting, as well as such supporting benefits as carpool parking or ride matching.

This is the third year the Valley has participated in the program. It is supported and promoted by Valley Metro through its Maricopa County Trip Reduction Program, which requires companies with 50 or more employees to develop an annual plan to reduce commute miles and trips.

A list of all the winners may be seen at www.valleymetro.org.

Chatting with Fido

We've just run across the perfect gift for all those people who leave their dogs or cats home alone all day, but call and talk on the answering machine several times to reassure their anxious pets.

It is called the Chatterbowl, and it basically is a food or water bowl with an electronic device that allows pet owners to record a 10-second message.

When the pet approaches the bowl, a photocell plays back the message.

The bowl was invented by **Jay Taylor** of Tucson, whose company is called Talk2Pet.

"There are many degrees of anxiety that some pets feel when their owners are away, ranging from listlessness to extreme behavior problems," Taylor said.

"While we don't offer Chatterbowl as a total solution, trainers, veterinarians and pet behaviorists we've spoken with feel it could be a useful component in an anxiety treatment regimen."



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